

George Hagopian
HOW A BLIND MAN IS MAKING
MONEY WITH R.I. REDS
Professor
Frederic H. Stoneburn

Hv 1792
H34 1925



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

How a Blind Man Is Making Money with R. I. Reds

A bitter battle and an amazing victory

By PROFESSOR FREDERIC H. STONEBURN

(Copyright, 1925. All rights reserved.)



The stately New England farm house that offered Hagopian a home and employment as a chore boy. He now owns the house, and the fine 130-acre farm along with it



The story of Hagopian of Redbird Farms, the young man without money, without experience, and without eyesight, whose only capital was a marvelous pair of hands and an inborn love for good chickens

HAD I heard the story of George Hagopian and his poultry farm years ago when I was new to the poultry business, I would have promptly said that such things could not be, that on the face of it no man could successfully develop such a large and profitable poultry establishment as Redbird Farm in spite of such obstacles. But now, having during the years come in close contact with so many thousands of poultrymen in all parts of the country and having seen so many astonishing things, I have learned that it is not safe to say that anything is impossible in this poultry industry of ours. When one takes the position that this or that cannot be done he quite commonly finds he must revise his statements because he finds someone actually doing it.

It was early March when I made a long trip to pay a visit to Redbird Farm which is located about a mile south of Wrentham, Mass. This attractive village, more than 250 years old and typical of the better class of New England Communities, is located on the main highway between Providence and Boston. Leaving the former city we

motored for miles through a most attractive country. Throughout this entire district one observes evidence of a great popular interest in poultry. There are plants without number, ranging from those of modest size to large commercial enterprises. Judging from the number of recently completed poultry buildings and new ones in the course of erection, it seems safe to assume that poultry husbandry is proving profitable in that section.

Perhaps a part of the secret may be found in the fact that these poultrymen sell their products direct to the consumer, cutting out the middlemen and retaining for themselves the usual costs and profits of distribution. Uncounted roadside

signs offered fresh eggs—or "Home Eggs"—dressed chickens and ducks. The famous "hot dog" stands so common along popular auto routes are here largely replaced by those serving chicken and duck sandwiches. Thus the producers are enabled to add another profit.

Just north of Wrentham is the great Weber Duck Ranch, the largest in New England and one of the most extensive duck ranches in America. In connection

is the famous Duck Inn which specializes in duck dinners which attract people from all parts of New England. Literally thousands of such dinners are served weekly throughout the season which opens early in April.

Wrentham, too, is noted as being for years the home of Helen Keller, that wonderful woman whose brain and will made her a world figure in spite of the fact that she was deaf, dumb and blind.

AS WE approached the town I began a quiet local checkup on the details of the reports which had reached me from various sources regarding Mr. Hagopian and his work. I managed to make conversation with farmers, mechanics and merchants, and the statements made to me by these various people who should know the facts were all in accord and to this effect: George Hagopian established himself on an old farm about fourteen years ago with scarcely a dollar of working capital and with no other source of income has built up a great poultry farm, created a business which has made itself felt in many States and made himself financially independent. "Why," said one man, "he must have spent \$10,000 on his place last year and his chickens made every cent of it."

Financial success in poultry husbandry is no rare thing. Men and women every-



Hagopian has pinned his faith on the Rhode Island Red—and he knows more about a real producing Red than the average breeder who is using both eyes. He always does his own culling.

where have accomplished this in varying degree. Often they have met and overcome great obstacles, but few have done what this man has, because—

George Hagopian not only lacked training, experience and capital, but was hampered at every turn as he now is and from early childhood has been totally blind. Pause, for a moment, and think that over.

I once read a poem which had to do with success and failure in life, as we mortals use these terms. It closed with the thought that in the eyes of the Great Umpire it is not a question of "whether you won or lost, but *how you played the game.*" This flashed into my mind as I talked with and observed this man who is denied the blessing of sight. Here is one who has played the game like a man, and that's all the credit one needs. More, he has won it. He asked no favors of life; he stood squarely upon his own feet and fought the battle, give and take. His victory means much to this world of ours because it shows that man is not a helpless victim of circumstance unless he admits it. This shining example must inspire to renewed efforts those who are discouraged, who feel that life has been unkind to them and that further effort is useless. I am frank to confess that I left Redbird Farm with a feeling of real shame that I have accomplished so little.

MR. HAGOPIAN is now thirty-seven years of age, a man of medium height, wiry and erect. In his strong, sensitive face one sees the marks of the struggle which he has endured. Let me briefly sketch his life.

Born in New England, he lost his sight when a mere child. He dimly recalls the appearance of the sun, the green of trees and grass—and that is all. Early in life he entered Perkins Institution, which is devoted to the education of the sightless. Some years later his immediate family found it necessary to remove to a distant part of the country, desired him to go, but he was eager to complete his course and so remained in Boston, alone. Thus he was deprived of contact with his close relatives.

During certain of his Summer vacations he boarded on the

farm which he now owns, then in the possession of an aged man, Mr. Fisher, who lived on the place but did not actively operate it. Here the youth developed that love for the country which eventually drew him back to the open fields; here he found true friends.

At the school, Hagopian secured a good general education, the benefit of which is apparent when he talks on any subject. He also studied music, learned piano tuning and how to cane chairs. He graduated in 1909, but took another year of more advanced work. In the fall of 1910 he stepped from the sheltering walls and faced the world. His cash capital was a pitiful \$50.

Where should he establish himself, what should he do? He turned back to the farm where he had spent many happy hours, the home of his friends. Mr. Fisher had passed away and the sole surviving member of the family, a daughter, lived in the century-old house. Miss Fisher was then a woman of full maturity. Today, in her early seventies, she still lives there in comfort and security. She is exceedingly active, physically and mentally, deeply interested in all the activities of the farm. She is mighty proud of "my boy," as she calls Hagopian, manages his household and takes an active part in all the business transactions which require the making of records or the passing of correspondence. I am certain she has been of great assistance in the development of the business, the feminine factor which seems to be always present where

that he was not kept very busy, that he did not enjoy a princely income. During his spare time he did such work as he could about the place, including the care of a flock of thirty mongrel hens housed in the basement of an old barn. He had absolutely no knowledge of the details of poultry management but, as he expressed it, he "just went at it and did it." He did it well, too, because the little flock earned some profit that Winter, provided some of the capital used to enlarge the flock the following year.

It is interesting to note that since Mr. Hagopian has made such a success in this line, courses in poultry husbandry have been introduced at the school from which he graduated.

In 1911 he raised 100 pullets by hen

power and these went into the barn basement that Fall, replacing the old hens. Much snow fell that season and a February thaw flooded the poultry quarters with two feet of water. Hagopian waded in, rescued the birds from the roosts and window sills where they had taken refuge, and moved them up to the barn floor. In spite of this and other troubles the flock did good work and earned enough to permit further expansion in 1912.

The big forward step in 1912 was the erection of a 50-foot poultry house. A workman was employed to put up the building, but Hagopian did no small part of the actual work, thus reducing cash expenditures. An incubator of 240-egg capacity and a lamp-heated brooder were purchased. Then the ambitious poultryman himself built another brooder, an exact copy of the purchased machine. During that season he reared about 500 chicks, carrying 200 selected pullets to maturity.

The flock was still exclusively composed of mongrels, the birds had paid good profits, but Hagopian believed that improved stock would bring in more money. So he sold the whole season's crop of youngsters, both cockerels and pullets, and bought 90 S. C. Rhode Island Reds. Some 40 of these were pedigreed, the offspring of trapnested layers which had made high records, and the balance were straight Reds from

a good laying strain but not pedigreed. It must have taken some nerve to do that, to give up 200 producers and keep less than half that number when money was so badly needed. But he had the courage of his convictions and went ahead. (Continued on page 60.)



Stoneburn

We publish herewith a likeness, Professor Frederic H. Stoneburn, whose wonderful stories are creating such a great interest among Poultry Tribune readers. "Who is Stoneburn?"—you may ask. He is America's first professor of poultry husbandry, a practical poultryman, successful teacher, scientific investigator, popular lecturer—and most important, a master writer of inspiring poultry literature.

THOSE marvelous hands! Long ago, before selecting layers by their physical conformation was generally known, Hagopian was working out the system. Year by year he has culled his own birds, handling them one by one, learning the points of the layers and of the loafers. I doubt if there are many men in this country who excel him as a judge of the laying capacity of a hen. Some slight difference in the texture of the plumage permits him to identify the birds which have sound color and those which are too light in shade. In the same way he can select the cockerels from a flock while the birds are so young that men with perfect vision are uncertain as to the sex of given specimens. He knows exactly what is going on, and literally keeps the affairs of the farm at his fingertips.

poultry enterprises are successfully developed from modest beginnings.

SO, LATE in the year 1910, Hagopian took up his residence at the farm and as a means of earning a living repaired the cane seated chairs of the neighborhood. One can easily believe

HV1792

C.1

H

PROFESSOR FREDERIC H. STONEBURN
HOW A BLIND MAN IS MAKING MONEY WITH
R.I. REDS.

Date Due

HV1792

C.1

H

PROFESSOR FREDERIC H. STONE-

AUTHOR BURN

HOW A BLIND MAN IS MAKING MONEY

TITLE

WITH R.I. REDS.

DATE DUE

BORROWER'S NAME

Bno-Dart INDUSTRIES

Newark, 8, N.J. • Los Angeles 25, Calif.
Toronto 6, Ontario

Made in U.S.A.

